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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

TUESDAY, March 26, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "HOUSE CLEANING QUESTIONS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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Most modern housewives have abandoned those great upheavals our grandmothers called "spring cleaning." But around this time of year when you begin to think of making the house fresh and clean for the new season, house-cleaning questions do come to the fore. You begin to think of the cleaning jobs you need to do here and there. And you begin to wonder about the best and easiest ways to do them. So the questions this week are all house-cleaning questions. And the answers come from the Bureau of Home Economics.

The first one is about cleaning leather upholstery. A housewife wants to know whether to use soap and water or furniture polish on her leather chairs.

Soap and water is the answer ---- a thick suds of mild neutral soap with as little water as possible. Go over the leather with the suds. Then wipe off all traces of soap with a damp cloth. Finally, dry and polish the surface with a soft dry cloth. Never use furniture polish, furniture oil, or varnish on leather. Many of these preparations contain solvents that soften the finish on leather and make the leather sticky. A special commercial leather cleaner and preservative contains water, and wax, and alcohol in a thin solution.

So much for leather chairs. Now a question about cleaning walls. A housewife asks: "How often do walls need cleaning, and what is the best way to do it?"

How often walls need cleaning depends a good deal on how much soot, dust, and grease is in the air. In some localities walls soil much more quickly than in others so need cleaning more often. Kitchen walls where volatile grease settles and collects dust need cleaning more often than walls in other rooms in the house.

Again, in homes with young children walls often suffer more from fingerprints and smudges. But in general once a month is often enough to brush the walls, or go over them with a vacuum-cleaner attachment.

By the way, the best wall brushes are soft, full and fluffy. They remove the dust lightly instead of rubbing it in, as a cloth-covered broom may do. If the brush fastens into a flexible spring-socket, it will lie close to the wall. The best quality wall brushes are made of soft white goat's hair twisted in galvanized wire that won't rust. Less expensive brushes are made of horsehair. They clean walls well, but are stiff so may catch in delicate draperies. You can buy wall-dusters of wool fleece, too. They clean very well when they are new, but they don't wash well. Washing mats the wool and may make it hard. When the wool mats and hardens, it streaks the wall. The only way to keep wool fleece soft enough for wall cleaning is to wash it in dry-cleaning fluid. Of course, you know you must keep wall brushes and cleaners clean. Otherwise, they will streak walls.

While we're on the subject of walls, let's consider the third question. A young housewife asks how to wash wallpaper.

Many wallpapers sell as washable. But some of these papers wash much better than others. So proceed with caution when you put soap and water on wallpaper. The design or the color of the paper may rub off even if it won't wash off.

Try out soap and water in some little inconspicuous place--behind the door perhaps, to see whether the paper will take it before you go ahead with the whole room. Here's how to wash wallpaper: Apply thick suds with a soft sponge to a small place at a time. Rub as lightly as possible. Rinse with a sponge squeezed out of clear water. Paper is always absorbent. So use as little water as possible.

Generally, puttylike wall cleaners or art gum erasers are safer than soap and water. Such cleaners remove light soil and often erase finger marks. Brush the walls before and after using them.

Grease on wallpaper is often a problem. The best way to take out a grease spot is to make a paste of Fuller's earth and cleaning fluid. Apply the paste to the spot, let it dry, then brush it off. The paste will draw the grease from the paper. If you don't get it all out with the first try, put on another application of paste.

The last question is about cleaning an enamel-covered gas stove. It's a new stove. And the housewife who owns it wants to keep it looking new.

The Bureau of Home Economics advises wiping stoves off after each meal, and then giving them careful cleaning every week, so they won't become caked with soot and grease. Enamel-finished gas and electric stoves are easy to keep clean with a cloth wrung out of soapy water. But remember....enamel is a glasslike coating. If you wipe it with a cold wet cloth when it is hot, the enamel may crack. Wipe the stove after each meal, and wipe up immediately any food that boils over. Then you won't need to scour the stove. Scouring roughens the enamel and metal trim. Every week remove the detachable parts of the stove and clean them. Trisodium phosphate will help with stubborn spots. If you must scour, use a very fine scourer like feldspar.

That's all the cleaning questions from the mailbag this week. But if you have more, write to the Department of Agriculture for the new free house-cleaning bulletin. The new house-cleaning bulletin is No. 1834. It is called "House Cleaning Management and Methods." As long as the supply lasts, you are welcome to a free copy. Write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture for it.

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